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Claude Lorraine. The latter will view them with no less interest as being generally the most ancient and important remains of their kind now existing in Ireland.

The origin of stone bridges in Ireland is not very accurately ascertained; but this much at least appears certain, that none of any importance were erected, previous to the 12th century. In that age our annals record the erection of two bridges over the Shannon and one over the Suck, by the Monarch Turlough O'Connor. There is reason however to conclude that those bridges were of wood, and that the first structures of the kind, of stone, were erected by, or after the arrival of, the Anglo-Normans.

Of these, the subject of our prefixed illustration ranks as one of the most ancient, having been erected by the English adventurers as a necessary step to their intended subjugation of the ancient province of Thomond; and when we observe the rudeness and apparent unskilfulness of its construction, and consider how comparatively short-lived many of the noblest structures of the kind have been, we may well wonder at its power in resisting for so many ages the destroying hand of time, and the giant force of such a great and rapid river.

Thomond bridge has the merit of being perfectly level. It crosses the main arm of the Shannon from the N. E. extremity of the English town, and is built on fourteen arches, under each of which some marks of the hurdles on which it was erected are said to be still visible. According to tradition, the original expense of this venerable structure was but *thirty pounds*.

Connected with the locality of Thomond bridge, there are many historical recollections of a deep and saddening interest; but the presiding spirit of our little journal bids us beware of bringing them into notice,—and we gladly obey the mandate. To see our countrymen of all classes and denominations, “united in the bond of peace,” is our first wish—our most ardent aspiration, and the page of history that would mar this consummation, by exciting one painful recollection, or one ungenerous exultation, we desire,—as it should be the desire of all good men,—to leave buried in silent oblivion. In lieu of such, let the reader take the following beautiful sonnet to the Shannon; the composition of a gentleman of rank, and what is better, of patriotism and talent, who resides upon the bank of the noble river he apostrophises. P.

THE SHANNON.

River of billows! to whose mighty heart
The tide-wave rushes of the Atlantic sea—
River of quiet depths! by cultured lea,
Romantic wood, or city's crowded mart—
River of old poetic founts! that start
From their lone mountain-cradles, wild and free
Nursed with the fawns, lulled by the wood larks glee,
And cushat's hymeneal song apart—
River of chieftains! whose baronial halls,
Like veteran warders, watch each wave-worn steep,
Portumna's towers, Bunnatty's regal walls,
Carrick's stern rock, the Geraldine's grey keep—
River of dark mementos!—must I close
My lips with Limerick's wrongs—with Aughrim's woes?
A de V—.

A TOUR TO CONNAUGHT.

LETTER III.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DUBLIN PENNY JOURNAL.

SIR—I ought to make some excuse, sufficient to satisfy your readers, for commencing a tour to Connaught, and in the course of five weeks getting no farther than the hill of Cappagh. It is but a poor plea to urge that your *undertaker*, Terence O'Toole, has something else to do than indite tours. You can console yourself with this reflection, which I suggest for my own benefit as well as yours—namely, that during the intervals of my performance, you have been able to supply your readers with *material* far better than I could furnish.

But to the point. In my last letter I abruptly broke off descending from Cappagh hill towards the Boyne. After having taken a very proper and ample breakfast at a

new *inn* (I beg mine host's pardon—*hotel*) that has been established on the spot where the old Nineteen-mile-house inn formerly hung out its sign, we proceeded about a mile, and passing the Canal bridge, observed a fine building erected by the Royal Canal Company as a hotel, but now untenanted, and apparently going to ruin. “How comes it,” said the Englishman, “that your Irish canals are such bad speculations? They are on a larger scale than almost any we have in England, and yet they seem to have little trade, and to be of scarcely any use in promoting the commerce of the country.” “Why, Sir,” said I, “if I might venture to give an opinion on such a subject, I would say that we *began at the end*. Trade and commerce should be found flourishing to a certain extent in a country before canals are ventured. It seems to me a false speculation to undertake to join this river with that seaport, as, for instance, the Shannon with the city of Dublin, until it is ascertained that there are manufacturing towns, and collieries, and potteries, and a large amount of commercial capital and industry in the country to which a canal might give convenient transit and circulation. Canals may *convey*, but can never *create*. In this way the Caledonian canal, one of the greatest undertakings of modern times, failed. To be sure it was a noble thought to join sea to sea, and use the great glen of Scotland as a ship canal, whereby the immense circuit of the western coast could be avoided. But it has not answered. There is no trade or transit between Inverness and the western coast of Scotland. I remember John Fitzgibbon, the famous Chancellor of Ireland, prophesying against these canals, that in process of time they would be left empty, and would then afford to the citizens of Dublin a sheltered ride where now the deepest waters roll. But, after all, he will prove I trust, a false prophet. The trade is increasing, though slowly, and I trust the passage boats, instead of creeping at their provokingly slow pace, will adopt the plan that has succeeded in Scotland, on the Forth and Ardrossan canals, where boats of a light construction go at the rate of twelve miles an hour—and what is extraordinary, the surge caused by this rapidity is not found to be so injurious to the banks as the slow motion of a heavy boat.”

We now arrived at the Boyne—and true it is that when you get to that river, it is about as ugly a stream, if stream it can be called that appears to have no current, as need be looked at. You approach it by what reminds you of desolation—a mansion house ruined in the rebellion of 1798—a place that recalls all the bitter recollections of that period of “domestic fury and fell civil strife.” Yes, look at the potatoe garden on the side of the road opposite the wasted mansion house—observe that little mound fenced in with gooseberry bushes—there lie in one large grave the remains of hundreds who fell in the attack upon the dwelling house of the Tyrrells—God keep such evil days and bloody deeds from ever recurring again! The Boyne flows lazily here amidst sedge and reeds—appearing but the dark drain of an immense morass—the discharge of the waste waters of the Bog of Allen. A strong position in time of war—Lord Wellington knows it well, he has often thrown his soldier eye upon it—his paternal mansion, Dangan, is not far off to the right, near Trim. How different was the young fun-loving, comic, quizzing, gallanting Captain Arthur Wellesley, when residing in his shooting lodge between Summerhill and Dangan, from the stern, cautious, careworn Fabius of the Peninsular war; the trifling, provoking, capricious sprig of nobility, dreaded by the women, hated by the men—the dry joker, the practical wit, the ne'er-do-well—despaired of, as if good for nothing, by his own family, from the redoubtable hero of Waterloo—the great prime minister of England—he who achieved a greater moral victory than that of Mont St. Jean, when neutralizing or overcoming political and religious animosities, he set a question at rest that had vexed the world for nearly three centuries. As this is treading on your forbidden ground of politics, I suppose you will use your scissars here, good sir, and cut out the peccant part. By-the-bye, Dangan itself is altered as much as Arthur Wellesley—the one as much for the worse as the other for the better. It was, I remember, a noble mansion, surrounded by walls belted in with trees, and altogether befitting a nobleman's residence—but, alas, it passed from the hands

of its absentee lord into the possession of as perfect a specimen of a bad tenant as Ireland, in the whole history of its rack-rentings can afford. The stories are so strange of the methods he resorted to to pay his rent, and of the means he made use of to raise money out of the smouldering ashes of his burnt castle, that I dare not venture to describe them. I cannot leave this passing notice of this extraordinary and unhappy man, without observing that he, as far as I could learn, had no right to affix the O to his name. He descended from the O'Connor-Kerry!!! No, sir, his grandfather, a brewer in the city of Cork, came from England, and Conyers was his name. The Boyne, then, is not here that lovely picturesque water which it becomes when it sweeps under the wood-crowned banks of Beau-park—winds under the limestone cliffs of Slane, washes the castle of the Marquess Conyngham—or meets the tide

“ At Newbridge town,
Where was a glorious battle,
When James and William staked a crown,
And cannons they did rattle.”

But here though the stream is muddy and ugly, is a very pretty new bridge just erected, but the road goes not over it, for a very ridiculous reason, as I was told by one of our couch companions. The bridge was constructed, and the approach from the Dublin side made to it, without ever considering that the passage which the new must take before it reached the old line of road on the Meath side of the river, must pass through a poor freeholder's potatoe ground—and he, when asked how much he would require in payment for the few perches of garden, replied, with modest Milesian self-possession, “that he would not consent to give up the inheritance of his fathers without receiving the sum of 1,200/.” “What, 1,200/ for a potatoe garden!” “Just so,” says Pat—and so the turnpike commissioners, (as I was told,) must let the road remain as it did of old, or pay Pat his demand, or apply for an act of parliament to force him into their terms. Our Manchester rider was, on hearing this, ready enough to remark—that here was an Irish blunder.

To the right of the road, after leaving the new bridge, is seen a fine green moat, the sure evidence in Ireland of the ancient importance of the place. These moats have given some trouble to antiquarians in accounting for their use and origin. Evidently artificial—they could not be for defence. Could they be for places of sepulture? They appear too large for that purpose; they are generally superior in size to the tumulus or cairn, and besides are always flat at the top. They appear to me to have been constructed for places of assembly, where the Chief held consultations with his sept, where the Brehon decided differences among the people. The very name of *moate* attests their origin. Amongst the Saxons, the Wittenagmote was the name given to their popular assemblies. The *mote* was of the same use with them as the *hof* and *ting* were to the Northmen of the Orkneys and the Isle of Man—places of trial and judicial combat, and also, before the introduction of Christianity, of sacrifices. Beyond the moat, and farther to the right on a swelling bank over the Boyne, is the spot where once stood the Abbey and Cathedral of Clonard—*Chlain-iraird*—the field of the western height: but not a vestige now remains, but a stone baptismal font, of what was once a bishop's see, and the most famous seat of sacred literature and pious study in Ireland. Here St. Finnian, the most learned of all the successors of St. Patrick, established, in the sixth century, his college, to which three thousand students resorted, not only from all Ireland, but also from Britain, Armorica, and Germany. The venerable Bede describes the English, both of the better and middle ranks, as coming here, not merely for the sake of study, but in the hope of leading a quieter and more contemplative life, (for it would appear that the Irish, in all their feuds, respected learning and the clergy) and under the direction of holy Finnian, receiving from Irish hospitality instruction, food, lodging, and books, without charge—*céad míle fáilte*. So great was the fame of Finnian as a commentator on Holy Scripture, that all the holy men of Ireland, came to hear wisdom from his animated discourses. Hither came the

twelve saints whom St. Patrick constituted Apostles of Ireland. The venerable Kieran of Saiger, who, with his hair whitened with the snows of an hundred winters, did not disdain to hear Finnian expound to him the sacred book; here also came Kieran of Clonmacnoise, the carpenter's son, who wore himself out in deeds of penance and sanctity, and died in his thirty-third year. The two Columbs, Columbkille, and Colum of Tirdaglas, the two Brendans, Brendan of Birr, and Brendan of Kerry, Ruadan of Lorra, Molua of Clonfert, and others, as reported by Usher and Colgan, resorted hither. It would appear that these holy men, while residing at Clonard, did not allow their studies to interfere with their bodily exercises, but that they cultivated the rich and fertile soil around their abode, and thus by invigorating their bodies enlivened their minds, and rendered them more capable of enduring the mental toil attendant on the accumulation of great learning. There yet remains a legend which says that St. Columba the son of Crimthan, one night when his lamp failed, being exceedingly anxious to master some important passage he had taken in hand, was seen with the fingers of his right hand tipped with light running along the leaves of his book, and so, from the effulgence which they cast on the pages, he was enabled to study on while all around him was dark.

Proceeding onwards for a mile or two from Clonard, the road reaches a long continuous line of gravel hills, along which it runs for a considerable distance, and which is, perhaps, one of the oldest lines of road in Europe. These long lines of gravel hills are all through Ireland called *aigirs* or properly *eiscirs*: this one, is that which formed, in ancient times, the grand division of Ireland. I think I could trace this *eiscir* from Dublin Bay by the green hills of Crumlin, and so along by the Eskir of Lucan, then south of the Liffey, near Celbridge, and so across the river near Clane, onwards by Donadea, until it strikes the line of road we are now travelling—then trending southwards of the hill of Cloghan, until, near Philipstown, another line of road takes advantage of its elevation, to run between two bogs; then passing through the barony of Garrycastle, in the King's County, in a very distinct line, it strikes the Shannon, in the exact centre of the island, at Clonmacnoise. This very curious natural *vallum*, just as distinct as the great Roman wall dividing South Britain from Caledonia, was adopted as the dividing line between the two parts of Ireland, and was called *Eiscir Riada*, extending from Dublin to Galway, the northern portion being called Leath Con, and the southern, Leath Mogha. The cause of this division, as the Irish historian has it, was this: in the year A.D. 125, Con Ceadathach, (of the hundred battles) was monarch of Ireland, and his reign “Patrio More” was turbulent; according to the custom of his country, though monarch of Ireland, he found it hard enough to be its master. He fought an hundred battles, as his name implies, for he was Con of the hundred *battles*, and not Con of the hundred *bottles*, as, by a ridiculous mistake, an Irish work of character represents him to be. Yet surely even the Temperance Society would allow that to open an hundred *bottles*, is a more innoxious business than to lead on to an hundred *battles*! Con, after being victorious in ninety battles, over sundry septs, found at last a powerful antagonist in Mogha Nuadat, king of Munster. Mogha, not content with his own share of Ireland—fair and fat Munster—must needs try his hand with Con of the hundred battles, and defeating his liege lord, compelled him to divide the island, and this *eiscir* formed the boundary—the northern division being called Leath Con, or Con's half, and the southern Leath Mogha, or Mogha's half. But king Con did not quietly stomach this concession; for one morning he had his rival assassinated in bed, and as a manslayer, he was slaughtered himself. After wearing his uneasy crown for twenty years, he was murdered by Tiobraide, son of Roderick King of Ulster, who, while Con was taking his pleasure unarmed in the hall of Tara, employed fifty ruffians in the attire of women to put him to death.

I am a garrulous rambler. Here I have filled up my allotted space, and must conclude by subscribing myself,

Your obedient servant,

TERENCE O'TOOLE.